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UM'S MONTY BULLERDICK LEAVES BIG CITY FOR BIG SKY

by
Eric Wiltse

The road from Disneyland to Big Sky country was more than a change of scenery for Monty Bullerdick. It led to a whole new way of living for the University of Montana senior tailback.

"I can relax and get into life more, instead of rushing around in the rat race all the time," says the Anaheim, California, native. "It's easier to handle your needs and problems when you slow down."

So, Monty traded in Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck for the mountains of Missoula, Montana.

The swap worked in Montana's favor as Bullerdick gave the Grizzlies immediate returns. He rushed for 1,022 yards last season, only the second Grizzly runner in the school's 80-year football history to go over 1,000 yards. Bullerdick became the Old Faithful of the Montana offense, churning out nearly five yards per carry and over 102 yards a game.

"I knew I could do well if I got the chance," says Bullerdick. "I need to carry the ball alot to get up my momentum. I'd carry 40 times a game if I could."

Monty is used to being a workhorse. At Fullerton Community College in California, he set school records for total rushing and total carries. A two-time junior college all-America pick, he feels the experience gained at Fullerton was invaluable to his football career.

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"Going to junior college is one of the best things a player can do," he explains. "I was a starter in my freshman year where I probably wouldn't have been in a four-year program."

A major factor behind Monty's transfer to UM was his Fullerton coach, Hal Sherbeck, a former Grizzly player and assistant coach at UM. Sherbeck, the "California Connection" in the Montana recruiting system, pointed to the far north, and Monty followed his recommendation.

A recreation major at UM, Monty has discovered the pleasures of skiing, fishing and backpacking.

"There's alot to do here in Montana. I don't miss city life at all," he reflects. Monty eventually plans to work in a youth-oriented field, like the YMCA.

"It would be a great challenge for me, to work with kids and see them succeed in life."

But his immediate goals are to help the Grizzlies become the Big Sky Conference contender.

"If we can win the Big Sky, my personal goals should come as no problem," he explains. "I want that thousand yards again."

Last season, Bullerdick was a first team all-Big Sky selection and Associated Press honorable mention all-American.

One of the keys to Monty's running success is his durability. In 13 years of competition, he has never been seriously injured. At 5-10, 170 pounds, he depends upon initial quickness to break loose for long gains.

However, Bullerdick is surprisingly strong for his size. In fact, he often lugs two or three opposing linemen around, seemingly just to spite them.

"I don't know why anybody would want to play defense," he says and shakes his head in wonder.

Bullerdick's longest run from scrimmage last year was 49 yards. Not content with that, he says he needs greater open-field speed.

"I can get that 15- or 20-yard burst alright, but then I hope the defensive back falls down," says Monty. "When I do get a defensive back one-on-one though, he won't bring me down by himself."

With that kind of determination and his amazing durability, 1978 figures to be another big year in the Big Sky for Monty Bullerdick.

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